



Mental Health Services
Oversight and Accountability Commission
Communications Unit
Monthly Report for May Activities
June 2008

Work Plan Adopted:

In May, Commissioners Henning and Vega presented the full commission with the final version of the Communications Unit Work Plan for 2008. The overarching intent is that the Communications Unit be a vehicle for reporting to the public milestones reached by the MHSOAC, along with public recognition of the commission's efforts.

Highlights of commissioner discussion of the work plan included Chair Gayle's urging that future efforts embrace more innovation in terms of ways to reach the public with the commission's message. Commissioner Vega clarified that the work plan touches on three levels of communication:

- 1) Internal communications between commission members;
- 2) Communications between the Commission and the public;
- 3) Communications with, and through, the media.

Commissioner Pating added that each technical resource group, or committee, should be tasked with individually identifying their communications strategies and needs as an explicit part of their work. It was also noted by Commissioner Poat that the upcoming five-year anniversary of voter approval of Proposition 63 presents an opportunity to herald strides made by the commission and its partners toward implementation of the Mental Health Services Act. This should take high priority in coming months.

Newsletter and Website development:

Planning and information gathering for upcoming newsletters and the launch of the redesigned website continued in May. Discussions were held with the Department of Mental Health's webmasters regarding their "next step" needs from Virillion, the firm working with the MHSOAC in redeveloping the website. We heard from stakeholders such as the California Network of Mental Health Clients urged speedy development of a more visually pleasing and logical website structure for clients to access via the internet.

Commissioner Communication:

We developed a draft of a public letter at the request of Commissioner Henning. The letter spoke to the need to continue protecting MHSA funds even in these tight

state general fund budget times. It will likely be revised in June, and placed on the MHSOAC agenda as an action item.

Media and Community Outreach:

We produced and distributed press releases on the first distribution of MHSA Housing funds (to Sacramento County); the symbolic weight of the visit of the Mental Health Bell to the state Senate floor in honor of the 50th anniversary of the California Mental Health Association, the swearing in of Executive Director Sheri Whitt. We also produced a one-page biography of Ms. Whitt, with photograph, that we hope will serve as a model template for doing the same for all commissioners.

Best Regards,

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